I: Good morning, and thank you very much for taking the time to help me with my bachelor's thesis research paper. I want to start by giving you some legal information regarding data protection. The treatment of all the information collected during this interview is anonymous. The information will be stored under a pseudonym and will be used exclusively for my thesis study. I need you to sign the data consent form within the protocols of the university that I'm serving my bachelor's thesis. This interview has neither any benefit nor risk to you, and you can leave it at any time. I want to ask for your consent to record this conversation as that would make it easier for me to analyze the data later, and I will also be taking some small notes during the conversation. Is that okay with you?

R12: Yes.

I: So, this interview is a study about the perceptions of sustainability in the eyes of consumers, specifically within the food packaging industry. There are no right or wrong answers, so we ask you to be as honest and objective as you can. Again, rest assured that the content of the interview is anonymous and used only for my thesis. Do you have any questions before we start?

R12: No.

I: So, my first question is, how would you personally define sustainability?

R12: I think there's a lot of different aspects, but overall I think sustainability is just about having a more, I guess, conscious mindset. So it can be as simple as trying to walk or take public transport and it can be as extreme as Greta Thunberg, you know? Though of course I don't think everyone needs to be like Greta Thunberg to be considered sustainable, that's just not possible but you get what I mean. So more just trying to be more aware of your actions and your surroundings and how you are impacting the world.

I: Okay. And to what extent would you say that you're concerned about environmental issues? Are you taking any actions in your daily routine to contribute to environmental sustainability?

R12: I would say I'm concerned about environmental issues. I can't say that it controls my life decisions, but I do try to do what I can. I think living here in Madrid is definitely a lot easier to do certain things than it is at home in the States.

I: Can you elaborate on that, like what do you think is easier?

R12: Oh, like for example at home you need a car to go everywhere. Like you don't even have an option because most places don't even have public transport, like my city doesn't have public transport. But in Madrid, I can get everywhere easily without a car by using the metro or just walking even so I love that. I think the food is also healthier here, like less preservatives and less chemicals and all. So I think that I like, unintentionally, buy better and healthier food than I

would at home. Food, especially the organic stuff, can be so expensive at home so even if I wanted to I realistically don't think I could buy that all the time.

I: Okay. And what do you care about when you buy packaged goods? What do you pay attention to? Is it color, packaging material, any visuals?

R12: I don't pay too much attention to the packaging, like that isn't usually the deciding factor for me. I think earthier colors, I don't know if that's a word, but like greens and browns are usually more attractive. I know that's not always true but that tends to at least initially catch my attention. And then trying not to buy plastic stuff, although if it is the cheapest option I will still buy that to be honest. I don't know what else. Oh ingredients as well, so trying not to buy things with a ton of unnecessary ingredients in them.

I: Okay. And what kind of packaged goods do you buy? Can you give me some examples of packaged goods you've bought lately, like milk, veggies, frozen food?

R12: Usually, I buy stuff like milk and eggs and all of that, bread. And then yeah frozen food, so the type of quick frozen meals, I know they're not great for you but I like having them for days when I don't have time. I don't really like to cook either so any kind of easy meals are great for me. So yeah like frozen veggies that I can eat with rice, tortillas, oh hummus. Yeah.

I: Okay. Among the products you mentioned, have you noticed if any of them were sustainable?

R12: I don't know. I guess a lot of them do come in plastic containers, or like plastic packaging, now that I think about it. But usually where I shop, like Lidl or something, you don't have a lot of different choices. Like tortillas are always in a plastic bag, you know? I guess the milk carton would be recyclable, but other than that, no.

I: Okay, and how do you assess if a product is environmentally sustainable or green? What criteria would you use to determine if a product is sustainable?

R12: Packaging for sure. So of course anything that is recyclable is way better than plastic. I don't really know what else. I don't really think too much about that, sorry I know that's not helpful.

I: No, that's fine. So what elements of a product would make you think something is more eco-friendly than another, regardless of whether you buy it or not?

R12: I mean, when it comes to the color green, I know there's a ton of psychology around that and how we naturally associate that with nature and trees and all that. Of course, that's not always the case, but often times I think we are just immediately drawn to something that looks like it is straight out of nature. So if you see something that's green versus.. I don't know like bright pink or something, maybe that's a bad example but whatever, you're obviously going to think that the green one is better. And I think most people aren't going to take the time to

actually read every label and check, so those kinds of things create immediate impressions. What else? I think anything that looks like a small company as well. I just learned this actually in a marketing class I am taking, about how these big corporations like Coca-Cola or P&G actually own a ton of small brands that we don't even know about. So you might that that you are buying from a local brand but they're actually owned by these giant companies that are just as bad.

I: Perfect. Okay, so now I'm going to share my screen and show you a series of photos of a variety of packaged goods and what you need to do is classify each of them on which of the three you think is the most sustainable and I asked you to explain why you feel that way about each of the products. I'm gonna share my screen real quick. Give me a second. Okay, so can you see my screen right here?

R12: Yup.

I: Okay, cool. So here is the first picture. So these ones will be the same brand and product but just different packaging materials, so which one would you pick out of these?

R12: I think the glass one looks like the best option. The can just looks super inconvenient, like I can't imagine having a can of ketchup so just because of that I don't like it. But the glass bottle you could recycle it. Or actually you could probably reuse it to hold, I don't know, juice or water or something. So yeah the glass one.

I: Got it. What about these three?

R12: The same thing, the glass one.

I: Okay. For the same reason?

R12: Yeah, because it looks like the most sustainable, like the most recyclable. Or maybe it's a tie between the glass one and the can, I don't know. I always just think that glass is more sustainable. I don't know it that's right or not, but I don't ever look at a can and think that it is sustainable, but I always feel better about using a glass bottle if that makes sense.

I: Yeah, I get it. Okay, what about these three?

R12: Same thing again, the glass jar. That I know for sure can be recycled because it looks like those pasta sauce jars, and you can always recycle those. Do you want me to say the least sustainable as well?

I: Yeah sure.

R12: So I think the least sustainable is the one in the middle because you would never be able to reuse that. Like that would go straight into the trash. The left one looks like it is bigger and so you could use that to store other stuff in it.

I: Perfect. So now we have these ones, which are different brands but similar packaging materials. So out of these three, which one is the most sustainable to you?

R12: I think I like the Chobani one. I've never seen the Noosa one before, I'm not a big yogurt person so I don't know I've never noticed it. But overall, at least just based on the packaging, the Chobani one just looks cleaner. Like it is more simple and more natural. Yoplait is like the stuff I would eat when I was a kid and I remember it being very sweet, so that now makes me think it probably has a lot of artificial sugar in it.

I: Okay, out of these three?

R12: Oh this is tough. Can I say it's a tie?

I: Yes, but is there anything that stands out about any of them?

R12: I think the one on the left [Simply Orange] looks the best to me, like the orange looks the most realistic and natural. It also has more green than the other two do. Other than that, not really. The left one says it has no sugar added so that's good I guess.

I: Okay. What about these three?

R12: I think I was immediately drawn to the one on the left [Land O' Lakes]. It just looks more appealing than the other two to me. The box is cardboard so that's good, and it just looks prettier, more natural.

I: And what about these three?

R12: I think the one on the left [Smucker's]. I like that they added the visuals of the strawberries. It makes it seem more natural. Like I guess the Welch's one has strawberries on it too so that's not a great explanation, but I just like the one on the left more. It's more appealing to me.

I: Got it. Now, these three?

R12: Um, I like the Triscuit ones. I've had those before and they just overall look the least processed out of these three. Less artificial I think. Like in comparison, the Club Cracker ones look so much more artificial. I think they were trying to use green to look healthier, but I don't think it works, or at least not for me.

I: Understood. Now, out of these three?

R12: Um, probably the one in the middle [Palmolive]. Actually no, sorry, the one on the right [Seventh Generation]. Yeah that one. It just looks super simple and minimal, so that one is probably better. But I'm not sure.

I: That's okay. What about these three? This is the last group with different brands and packaging materials.

R12: Okay, so I'm a little conflicted. So on one hand I would say On The Border because it's a glass jar, so obviously that one is better. But then Jack's Special seems like a smaller company, and even though their packaging is plastic, it also looks reusable. So I don't know if that combined actually makes it better. Yeah, you know what? Let's go with that one then.

I: So Jack's Special?

R12: Yeah.

I: Okay, out of these three?

R12: I think the Quaker one. The other two are both plastic and they look like they are smaller, so you are getting less food and you are creating waste. But with the Quaker oats you can recycle the box and you will get a lot more granola out of it, so I like that.

I: Got it. What about these three?

R12: Just packaging wise, the one on the right [Volleman's] wins for me. Since it is a glass bottle and it looks like it's from a small farm. And then I would pick FairLife because they have a ton of great statistics on there. And then I guess Horizon Organic would be last.

I: Got it. And then these ones, I think these will be the last ones.

R12: I think the one on the right is the best, because you will get a lot more coffee. Like yeah the can is good but then you only get one coffee, so overall you will create more waste, but at least with the one on the right you will get many cups of coffee so that is way better even though the cap is plastic and stuff. And I think just the green and the little logo is more appealing overall.

I: Okay, and I have one last follow-up question to end the interview. Did you perceive any greenwashing from any of the brands we reviewed today? Greenwashing refers to intentionally misleading or deceiving consumers with false claims about a company's environmental practices.

R12: Yes, there was one I particularly remember is the oats or the granola one. So I remember seeing on the Quaker's box that it said something like Simply Quaker, or….

I: This one, right?

R12: Yeah so that Simply Granola. Like that "simply" doesn't really mean anything. Anyone can say simply about anything, but even something like that makes you think that it is better. Or even things like FairLife or that dish soap adding the different stats on their bottles to draw

customers in. Like I didn't read them very closely but they could be super basic stats and we wouldn't really know. I can't imagine a lot of people stand there in a store and read every detail on a bottle. But yeah, so yeah there was definitely greenwashing. I hope that helps.

I: Yes, that's great! Thank you for participating in my study, I really appreciate your help!

R12: Thank you.